

CLIMATE NEWS

From Sheldon Whitehouse and Jeff Merkley

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Climate Change Threatens Fish in Ohio, Nationwide



According to a new report from the National Wildlife Federation, roughly half of the nation's freshwater fish habitat is projected to decline by the end of the century due to climate change. Severe wildfires in Southwestern states are choking streams and fish with ash and sediment. Western mountain snow packs are melting one to four weeks earlier than 50 years ago, and the diminished snowpack alters streams fed by snowmelt and affects fish migration and spawning cycles. In Ohio, species will be unable to live in increasingly warmer streams and in a growing oxygen-depleted dead zone in Lake Erie. More powerful and frequent storms wash fertilizer off Ohio farms into the lake, facilitating the growth of toxic algal blooms that rob the water of oxygen. Rising water temperatures threaten efforts to restore streams polluted by now-shuttered steel mills, including in restored portions of the Black River, where 12 of 22 fish species would not be able to survive projected higher temperatures. Much is at stake, including the recreational fishing industry. In 2011, 1.16 million people spent over \$1 billion on freshwater sport fishing in Ohio, and 27.5 million people \$25.7 billion across the country. *(The Columbus Dispatch)*

G-20 Leaders Agree to Cut Use of Potent Greenhouse Gases

At last week's Group of 20 (G-20) summit in Russia, leaders from the world's biggest economies agreed to join the U.S. and China in reducing the production and consumption of hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs), a class of highly potent greenhouse gases commonly used in refrigeration. The most common HFC is 1,430 times more damaging to the climate than carbon dioxide (CO₂), according to the EPA. The U.S. announced two agreements to work toward a reduction of HFCs using the framework of the Montreal Protocol, the 1987 United Nations treaty to protect the ozone layer. The first was an agreement between all of the G-20 nations, including India and Brazil, two of the world's fastest-growing countries. A separate agreement between the U.S. and China reiterated their June 2013 commitment to work together to phase down HFCs. If left unchecked, HFC emissions are expected to reach the equivalent of 20 percent of CO₂ emissions globally by 2050. However, the White House said the multilateral agreement could cut 90 billion tons of CO₂ equivalent by then, about the same as eliminating two years of CO₂ production completely. *(Reuters)*

50 U.S. Power Plants Emit More CO₂ than All but 6 Countries

A new report from Environment America found that if the 50 U.S. power plants emitting the highest amounts of carbon pollution comprised their own country, that country would be the world's seventh biggest carbon emitter, ahead of South Korea and Canada. Overall, the nearly 6,000 U.S. power generation facilities account for 41 percent of the nation's greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. But the 100 highest-emitting plants alone—all but two of which are coal-fired—create nearly half of those heat-trapping emissions. The report notes that power plants produce a disproportionate share of GHGs. For example, in 2011, the 50 largest sources were responsible for 30 percent of all U.S. power sector emissions of carbon dioxide but produced only 16 percent of the nation's electricity. Environment America used self-reported data from power companies to compile the report, which found that Texas, Ohio, Florida, and Pennsylvania ranked highest for overall power plant carbon pollution. *(Huffington Post/Environment America)*

Climate Change Makes Pests Move North From the Tropics

The habitats of hundreds of crop pests are shifting away from the tropics at a rate of nearly two miles a year, according to a new study. The researchers say climate change is the most likely explanation because rising temperatures make new habitats more inviting. Agricultural pests spread mainly by being carried on transported farm products, but weather is the second biggest influence on pest dissemination. To investigate the likely effect of climate change, University of Exeter scientists studied 50 years of data on the distribution of 612 crop pests. They found an average shift towards the north and south poles of about 1.7 miles per year. Warming-driven pest invasions have serious implications for agriculture and food security. Between 10 and 16 percent of global crop production is already being lost to pests like fungi, bacteria, viruses, insects, and worms. The losses caused by fungi and fungi-like micro-organisms alone amount to enough to feed 8.5% of the global population.

(The Guardian/nclimate1990)

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Sheldon Whitehouse".